

# Brother Phillips

## Answers

### Brother Rhett's Searching Questions

Edited by Leon King

Introduction: Rhett's questions were by phone, and my answers so lengthy, I promised him I would set forth the distance between evangelical Calvinism and our position, particular on the subject of how Jesus "saves," which he recognized to be as he put it, "man-centered," rather than "God-centered," and wanted me to show him how to change that focus. This was my attempt to do so, recognizing that the phrase "Jesus saves," to be the focus that makes the emphasis to be man-centered. — Stan Phillips

Rhett, I'll attempt to answer your host of questions, and I'll post them for anyone else interested. Please do not think I'm thinking you fit into the various categories I will discuss. I already know you are long past most, if not all of them. But, finding a place to start, will be rather elementary.

We both have been reared among or sojourned among those strangers to the Covenant of Grace, and both have too long been exposed to Arminian concepts, since we both have been there, I suppose there is my best starting place.

Humans develop concepts to put some form of order in their lives and thoughts. We assign "words," as short-cuts to the expression of those concepts to enable us to communicate them to and with others. In our case, we have discovered many (perhaps most) Arminian concepts to be in error, and we have left them behind; Yet we still use the *words* once assigned to express them. It is exceedingly difficult to get rid of those words from our vocabulary, because they are reinforced every time we get around an

Arminian, and since they are a host as numerous as locusts, we are always having them reinforced! To the point now:

We both know that people "try" to do things they can't do. No one "tries" to do things they can do - they just do them! Yet, Arminians are forever speaking of a god that "is trying to save you." The implication is that "He can't!" and we both know that is dead wrong! But, there is that annoying word, cropping up in our conversation, even though we no longer hold to that little false Arminian concept of a helpless god!

Again, we know that people are in "want," when they are deficient in things they either desire or need. Here we go again: We know that with God, "the cattle of a thousand hills" are His, and all the "gold is Mine," and "if I were hungry I would not tell thee." Hence, we both already know that God does not stand in "want" of anything; and yet, there is another annoying word in our vocabulary that is a hang-over from our Arminian days, after we have long learned better! "God wants you to let go and let Him have His way." Sound rather ridiculous in that way now, but we are still plagued with "unacceptable words."

Another comes to mind. "God **saves** His people from their sins." "Saves", a plural "s" on that word. Does Him yet? Careful here. We could suggest one take down a concordance and look up that word, and see if he can find it in the Bible? My answer is, "I looked. And it "ain't in it!" And should it be? No, not as we now understand the atonement of Christ WAS for His sheep, and for no others.

The "atonement of Christ." We, I fear, are too slow grasping the truth of that doctrine, and its full ramifications, BECAUSE we still are "hung up" on that Arminian word "saves," and their concept is still imbedded within it. "Who hath **SAVED** us, and **CALLED** us with a holy calling, not according to our WORKS, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given us

in Christ BEFORE the world began." We both have left that Arminian interpretation long, long ago. Let's examine it, anyway.

The text is II Tim. 1:9. In this text, the apostle puts "saved" antecedently to the "called." Now by experience we understand that His calling us to salvation (effectual calling, or irresistible grace) in our experience is in this life. But this text puts the "saved" prior to that calling, therefore it is proper to ask: How long BEFORE our calling did He **save** us? Arminians have no concept by which they could understand that text; but we, and Calvinists, should have sufficient understanding to comprehend it. They cannot say, "Before the foundation of the world," when we admit that Christ is the **Savior** of sinner. "She shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call His name Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins." (Matt. 1:23.) First, He has a people to be saved, before He came to do that gracious work. Second, saving them is exactly what He came to do. And Third, where we now stand is, that is exactly what HE DID! - not what He is "trying" to do; "wanting" to do; or delegating the most important aspect of His mission to others to do after He failed - not having time to do it, because Herod and Pontius Pilate and the Gentiles crucified Him before He did it! So, He had to delegate the actual saving to Arminians to get the mission achieved. Neither of us will have that!

Back to an old Arminian concept that we both once held. How do WE get sinners saved? Why, WE must get them BORN AGAIN! Of course. And HOW are we gonna do that? Preach the word to them, quote John 3: 16, and do some begging and pleading, and persuading them to "let" God save them. Make them pity God. "He is trying!" but you won't "let" Him; poor Jesus! He "wants" to do it, but He "can't" unless you "let Him." Again, Rhett, we both have left that Arminian foolishness far behind, as too unworthy of the Great Creator God that we adore and worship. Such a little puny god as we once described with that Arminian concept, is far too undignified for His

Majesty and Praise. Let me revisit that theory again with all our hindsight with us.

Perhaps Mr. Fortner had a business and had hired servants working for him. One day he expressed a "wanting to have a son," to one of his employees. Hearing of this, the employee goes to Mrs. Fortner, and says, "Mr. Fortner so loved you that he wants you to have a son for him, and your son will be heir of all he owns." Jude 3:16. Instantly, Mrs. Fortner "hears" the words, "conceives," and shortly thereafter "brought forth a son, and called his name Rhett Fortner."

Sounds rather silly! That is, however, what WE as Arminians once believed about God getting His children. Instead of begetting them Himself, He sent preachers, soul-winners, Bible teachers, and religious salesmen to regenerate them by their quotation of sentences taken from the Bible. And kazaam! They are saved! Then, to keep them for catching on that WE did it, we tell them the "Lord 'saves' them." And that makes everything alright with the delusion. Instantaneous full assurance of man-made salvation! We did it! and continued to do it until the Lord Himself put a stop to it! And praise His Holy Name He stopped us!

But, you and I both know that the Holy Spirit sovereignly begets "with the incorruptible seed, the Word (essential) of God that liveth and abideth forever." I Peter 1:23. So we have left that anti-Christian concept far behind, to press on to the mark of the prize of the high calling of Jesus Christ, in ways that ascribe the full glory of salvation to Him that loved us and give Himself for us."

But, going back again. How are these people really "saved," if indeed they are? Christ took three of His disciples upon a mountain, and a cloud came down on the mount, and the disciples saw and heard Jesus talking to Moses (representative of the Law) and Elijah, (representative of

the Prophets." Of very great importance was what they heard them talking about! That conversation was "And, behold, there talked with Him two men, which were Moses and Elias: Who appeared in glory, and spake **of His decease which He should ACCOMPLISH at Jerusalem.**" Luke 9: 30-31. An ACCOMPLISHMENT BY HIS DECEASE! By His decease, He was to ACCOMPLISH something AT JERUSALEM, not many day hence.

Here, Rhett, is where we have arrived in our long journey from natural religion's freewill or Arminian concepts; and we arrive there when those concepts, and the words that enforce those concepts are burned out of our system. It wasn't an instantaneous event, as some wish to teach. It was long, and hard coming to an ACCOMPLISHED and COMPLETED SALVATION by Christ alone; and that the glory is His only, because it is **seated in His Atonement!** Limited and Particular, and efficacious. No "trying" to do it; no "wanting" to do it; "no "letting Him" do it - It IS DONE! He will not die again; He will not redeem another; "He shall see the travail of His soul and be SATISFIED!" And, here, too, I think we both have arrived. But I will now look at the Biblical words and concepts that proclaims this finished and completed and accomplished salvation; and hopefully follow it, with why "preach the Gospel?" What do the preaching do in the scheme of an accomplished and completed and successful atonement?

The first text I have already quoted: "Who hath SAVED US (already) and Called us. . ." But look at so many. many more, also in the past tense.

In Luke, actually before Christ's suffering and death, as it was so certain to be accomplish, the Scripture say by the prophet Zacharias, when filled with the Holy Ghost, "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for **He hath visited and redeemed** His people." - Luke 1:68; And this is verified by Galatians 3:13, "Christ HATH **redeemed** us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree." That does **not** teach that He is going to redeem anyone; and ought

not, since Paul is writing **after the fact**. So by His atonement, He **actually redeemed** all He would ever redeem. A finished and accomplished work, by Him and Him alone. No preachers or soul-winners involved in this aspect of His glorious work. It cannot be said in this setting, "Jesus **saves**." It must be said, instead, "Who hath **saved** us. . ." In 1 Peter 1:18, a second witness is given: "Forasmuch as ye know that we were **not redeemed** with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a Lamb without blemish and without spot." Here, the apostle connects this past tense redemption directly with the atonement of Christ - "His precious blood."

I need to say, and I think you already discern this, but anyone that concludes that the atonement of Christ (1) is for all mankind; or (2) achieved nothing for the recipients thereof; or (3) was as much for the goats as for the sheep, or for the reprobate as much as for the elect; or (4) is based upon a universal love of God for all mankind; is spiritually more blind than bats. He is the Great Shepherd, BECAUSE He laid down His life FOR MY SHEEP." Nowhere, can an intelligent and/or educated man find a text that teaches the universality of the atonement of Christ. It, too, is not in the Bible. {No John 3:16 does not teach it!]

The atonement of Christ, and His redemption of those atoned for, was for the "reconciling the world unto Himself," and of this we notice, "For if when we were enemies, we were [past tense] **reconciled** (past tense) to God by the death of His Son. . ." Romans 5:10 Again, the past tense, accomplished, and finished work of Christ in the reconciliation of His people to Himself, is based upon the atonement. The apostle's argument is if this be so, then, ". . .being **reconciled**, we shall be **saved** by His life. And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, **by whom** we have **now received** the **atonement**."

The Scriptures, minus all the Arminian deadwood we have been encumbered with, teaches clearly that the atonement of Christ actually did, then, and there "at Jerusalem," two thousand years ago, save all His people with an everlasting salvation. Nothing can be added to it; the book is sealed; and nothing can be taken from it; the deed is done.

If we could erase all those Arminian concepts and terminologies from our mind and vocabularies, I do think we could grow much faster in the grace and knowledge of the truth. However, that is an impossible "if." We are stuck with it until the Lord flushes them out of our systems.

Brother Rhett, the FIRST objection I ever heard relative to the doctrine of election was at Warner Robbins Air force base, where I worked when I first believed these precious truths. A young man was boasting that on Sunday, he was going to be ordained by the greatest collection of "preachers," in the Macon Baptist Association. The next day, I brought him a copy of their annual Minutes, and gave the copy to him. I had him to check the ministers that were to be on his presbytery. He proudly did so. - And I had him trapped. I asked him, "Are you going to preach what these ministers believe?" In a boastful voice, he answered, "I certainly am!" I flipped the Minute open to the Southern Baptists Articles of Faith," each started with "1. We believe ...."

"2. We believe....." "3. We believe...." When he got down to: "We believe in the everlasting love of God to His people, that there was a covenant of grace before the world began . . .a number so certain it can not be added to or diminished. . . .whereby they are saved. . . .etc., He exclaimed: "Preacher! If I believe that, I'd never preach a lick in my life!" I asked him, "You mean if the Gospel does not do what YOU think it should, you will not preach it! If you believe what those articles teach, you will beg for a place to preach it, or find you a stump to preach it from." I meant

every word of that; and in time, he did preach it, and he did have to beg for a place to preach it, and he did have to find a stand from which to preach it!

The preaching of the Gospel has **its own separate and distinct purpose**, or utility. It CANNOT produce life in anyone! It cannot "save sinners," in the Arminian sense of that concept. The men called of God, are not called to be "mediators" between God and man - Christ alone holds that office, rightly so. They are servants - they serve the purpose for which God has called them, and it is NOT for doing what Christ HAS ALREADY DONE; and what only God can do. They are not divine beings; but mere men with like passions with all other men.

Interestingly, they are called by the same Greek word as that of Angels - they are "messengers." They only carry a divine message to God's LIVING people, made alive by God Himself by divine quickening and a new spiritual birth from above. But, Scripturally, it is said what they are for. "And He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastor and teachers; **FOR THE PERFECTING OF THE SAINTS**," Did you note that. They are already "saints," but the gospel ministry is for the perfecting of them, "For the work of the ministry, for the **edifying of the body of Christ: until WE ALL come in the UNITY OF THE FAITH, and of the KNOWLEDGE OF the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: THAT WE HENCEFORTH BE NO MORE CHILDREN, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive.**" Ephesians 4:11-15

Now, here I should conclude my epistle with this particular attention: Instead of preachers trying to usurp Christ's work in salvation; they ought to confine themselves to the above, which is THEIR work. They actually have a very important and full job ahead of them if they but do the above. Instead, the Arminians are trying to do what God does; and not doing what the



ministry is called to do. They instead actually controvert themselves by tossing their hearers to and fro with every wind of false doctrine, a "lo here and a lo there," speculating upon theories they know nothing off, sensationalism, and anything except "edifying the body of Christ," or working to bring their congregations to the unity of the faith, which they do not dare preach, or to the knowledge of the Son of God, but rather "preaching another Jesus, another Gospel," which the apostle says is a "perversion" of the Gospel.

A preacher, called of God, to do the above, has a full time job just doing that; without trying to save souls that Christ has saved; regenerate men whom only God can regenerate, and getting men to join the church, when it is God that "adds to the church such as should be saved." etc.

One last thing. The prefix "*hyper*" basically means "going beyond," among other things. If one "goes beyond John Calvin," then it is no big deal to say he is a "Hyper-Calvinist." I baptize by immersion: John Calvin didn't. I believe in Holy Spirit regeneration without midwives. John Calvin didn't. I believe the spiritual birth is the addition of a "new man" within the natural man; not a biological or spiritual change in the natural man. John Calvin didn't. So, I no longer care if anyone calls me a "hyper-Calvinist." In fact, I am not ashamed to admit it: I'm a Baptist - I baptize by immersion.

If a "Baptist" is also Calvinistic, he is a "Hyper-Calvinist" whether he likes to be called that or not; but it is my thinking he ought not to be ashamed of his "going beyond Calvin," or any other man, so long as he sticks closely to the Bible.

Well, I suppose I've confused you enough for one e-mail. I do appreciate you, and I think I am in accord with you and your experience.

Stanley C. Phillips